

the fortune of its position, but to its own self-preserving thickness. Of the northern snows, on the other hand, what is left over from year to year owes its conservation solely to latitude. Thus the survival of the little snow that is left at the southern pole, instead of proving the potency of the eccentricity, actually accentuates its impotence. Were it not for the presence of the lowlands with the increased moisture they gather and bequeath, there would be no eternal snow around the southern pole at all.

32. Thus this second characteristic of the polar patches, the centring of the one, the eccentricing of the other, corroborates and enforces the testimony borne by the maxima and minima. For it shows that the minima are in truth more accentuated than they appear to be. The little minimum at the south pole would vanish entirely every year, instead of sporadically, were it not for local causes.

33. Our survey of the Martian polar caps, then, leads us to some curious conclusions. It starts with apparent contradiction of Croll's theory, to end in final confirmation of it. It comes to curse and stays to bless. But it does more. It shows that eccentricity of orbit by itself not only causes no universal glaciation, but actually produces on occasion the opposite result in more than offsetting by summer proximity what winter distance brings about. Eccentricity needs water and a great store of it as handmaid before its glacial work can be accomplished. Could our earth but get rid of its oceans, we, too, might have temperate regions stretching to the poles.

Stated Meeting, December 7, 1900.

Vice-President WISTAR in the Chair.

Present, 13 members.

A communication was made by R. W. Shufeldt, M.D.,
"On the Osteology of the Striges."

The following annual reports were read:

The Treasurer.

The Curators.

The Publication Committee.

The Hall Committee.

The Library Committee.

The Phillips Prize Essay Committee.

The Librarian laid upon the table the list of donations to the Library, and thanks were ordered therefor.

The Society was then adjourned by the presiding officer.

ON THE OSTEOLOGY OF THE STRIGES.

[STRIGIDÆ AND BUBONIDÆ.]

(Plates X-XVII.)

BY R. W. SHUFELDT, M.D.

(Read December 7, 1900.)

INTRODUCTION.

Of all my published scientific papers, or in fact of any of my writings, the first to appear was a memoir devoted to the *Osteology of Speotyto cunicularia hypogæa* (Bull. U. S. Geol. and Geogr. Surv. of the Terr., Dept. of the Interior. Vol. vi, No. 1. Washington, 1881). This contribution to the anatomy of the Burrowing Owl was quite complete, and illustrated by many figures given principally upon three full-page lithographic plates. It was done, however, far from all civilization, the museums and the libraries, and therefore offered but few comparisons in its pages with the osteology of other species of Owls.

This paper underwent a partial revision at my hands and appeared again in my work entitled *Contributions to the Anatomy of Birds* (12th Ann. Rep. of the late U. S. Geol. and Geogr. Surv. of the Terr. [Hayden's]. Washington: Govt. Printing Office, Oct., 1882. Author's Edition). Some little improvement was made in the paper, but the same plates and figures were reproduced, and no general comparisons included in the research. In the present memoir a large number of osteological comparisons have been made, substantially based upon the facts brought out in the original and revised issues of the *Speotyto* article, and the characters found upon examination to present themselves in the skeletons of other American *Strigide*, specimens of which at this time are not lacking